

NHSBT Public Board Meeting

02 December 2025

Chief Executive's Report

Status: Official

A few months ago, we moved out of the blood amber alert period and have continued to focus on maintaining strong blood stock levels, particularly for O-negative and B-negative blood. In recent weeks, I have engaged with leaders across the organisation to review progress and ensure we are delivering effectively for donors and patients. We have also begun looking ahead to how the organisation can continue to build resilience within a changing healthcare landscape. These discussions have generated several constructive ideas that will be developed further in the months ahead.

This is my final Board meeting, and I am confident that this work will continue and that the organisation will build on these discussions to shape a refreshed strategy that supports high-quality services for patients and donors for the long term.

The following report summarises key developments since the last Board meeting, highlighting progress, priorities, and areas of ongoing focus.

1. Service Delivery

Blood Stocks: As of mid-November, overall blood stocks were above target at 7.5 days of stock (DoS). Two groups were below target. O-negative was at 3.0 DoS and B-negative at 4.0 DoS. Stock levels are being managed via Blood Operations Leadership Team (BOLT) oversight, with weekly updates being provided to the Executive team. A number of key interventions have been deployed by this group including providing better access to appointment grids for priority donors, increased marketing and communications activities to support higher appointment bookings, regular communications with hospital customers and the establishment of an Ro taskforce, who are targeting an increase in Ro collections to support the impact of Ro substitutions.

Platelets: As of mid-November, stock levels for platelets, across all groups, were above target levels. Consultations to support platelets resilience have been launched. This consultation is seeking to increase platelet collection and production over the weekend within the Southwest. The consultation process is planned to complete in March 2026.

Plasma: From August 2024, NHSBT has delivered a total of 635,000 litres of plasma to NHSE to be fractionated into plasma derived medicines (Immunoglobulin and Albumin) and supplied to patients. From April 2025 to March 2026, we will ship 450,000 litres (287,000 to date). Plasma is recovered from all whole blood donations, and any not used for clinical purposes is sent for fractionation. We also collect plasma

directly from donors in our 3 source plasma clinics. Over 195,000 litres of plasma has been collected in 25/26 so far from both Source and Recovered.

Increasing the self-sufficiency of the UK in plasma derived medicines is a key goal as demand continues to rise globally. In the short term, NHSBT is scoping potential expansion locations for increased source plasma collection and is working with DHSC/NHSE to inform the long-term strategy in the delivery of plasma derived medicines.

Ensuring that collection of plasma is efficient and productive is a key focus and this has been delivered in 25/26 through the continued delivery of our transformation agenda. Recent highlights include:

- Integrating validation at our manufacturing sites and close down of the temporary validation facility.
- First combined shipment of plasma from NHSBT and Scotland for fractionation

Blood Donor Base: The whole-blood donor base increased by 300 in the 2 months to end-October, compared to a 1,900 decline in the previous 2 months. O-negative fell more slowly, by 1,100, while the B-negative donor base grew fractionally and Ro fell very slightly. The PFM donor base peaked in June but has since dropped by 1.5%, due to recruitment challenges. The Donor base Resilience Programme received support from Investment Committee in September, introducing new workstreams and onboarding staff. Activity tracking is underway.

New Wolverhampton Team: The Wolverhampton mobile Blood Donation team began collecting blood during the week commencing 17th November. The new team has been introduced as part of the Future Proofing Blood programme, adding additional appointments to support blood stock resilience. The additional appointments are already proving to be popular with donors. Appointment bookings for the first 5-weeks are at high levels, with higher-than-average bookings for O-negative, B-negative and Ro donors.

Brighton Donor Centre: Brighton Donor Centre opened in September and is already proving to be popular with donors. Since opening, the centre has collected over 2,750 donations. Around a third of these donations have been given by new donors, which is supporting a growth in the local donor base.

Organ Donation: Rates of deceased organ donation after brainstem death (DBD) are declining internationally. This is problematic because DBD donors are a valuable opportunity for high quality transplants. In the UK, we remain c.2% ahead of target for all deceased donors and 5% ahead of the same time last year. This is because of continued growth in Donors after Circulatory Death (DCD), up 17% in the last 12 months alone. Taken together with improved organ utilisation rates, we are currently 1% ahead of deceased donor transplant targets and 6% up on last year. However, we are beginning to see more pressures in the NHS acute hospital environment as the winter season begins. We are therefore acting to ensure that diagnosis of death by neurological criteria (vital to DBD) is prioritised wherever possible.

Cornea Donation: Urgent work to improve rates of cornea donation has led to an improved outcome in October, averaging 9.4 donors a day, up from 7.4 a day in September. In October, ocular donors totalled 290 vs 222 in September. We are also accelerating our implementation of Eye Retrieval Schemes and widening the work to raise referrals via all routes to ocular donation. This means that we have been able to

increase the weekly issue of corneas to be lifted to 100 for all of November, and 90 at the start of December. NHS England are advising providers of the improvement in supply.

External Inspections: In the last quarter, NHSBT was inspected by external regulators and accreditation organisations across various service areas and multiple sites. We continue to obtain positive outcomes from these assessments and further validation of the robustness of NHSBT's Quality Management System. The outcome of these inspections is shown in table 1 below:

Table 1: External inspection outcomes August – October 2025

Regulator/Accreditor	Inspection month	Critical	Major	Other (Minor)
UKAS	18 – 19 August	0	0	4
EFI	23 September	0	0	6
BSI	15 – 17 October	0	0	2
MHRA	21 -24 October	0	0	2
HTA	22 – 24 October	0	0	0

UKAS – United Kingdom Accreditation Service

EFI – European Federation of Immunogenetics

BSI – British Standards Institution

MHRA – Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency

HTA – Human Tissue Authority

In the last quarter, the organisation has hosted **11 inspectors** over **30 inspection days**.

Process Improvements: We continue to make iterative changes to the incident management process and are seeing positive outcomes as a result. Going digital first for incident reporting has made this activity more efficient across the organisation, particularly for our Blood Donation teams. We have seen a 62% reduction in the use of the paper-based form within a month of the online tool implementation, releasing 100+ hours of staff time.

Over the past 12 months, we've seen a significant reduction in the average age and numbers of major incidents awaiting closure — from 16 incidents this time last year to 5 and the average days overdue down from over 60 days to 13 days. This improvement is largely due to focused efforts by the Quality Assurance team and stronger engagement from directorates. Meanwhile, the broader process improvement initiative remains ongoing.

Exercise Pegasus: Exercise Pegasus is a Cabinet Office sponsored exercise on the theme of Pandemic Response. The organisation participated fully in the exercise at a national and executive level. It is estimated that approximately 90 colleagues took part, resulting in the largest engagement of NHSBT staff in an exercise for at least ten years. Not only did the organisation respond to the immediate scenario impacting NHSBT it also supported proposed projects, that would help the country in combating a pandemic including:

- testing for a novel virus
- advice to the transfusion community countywide in regard to the emerging pathogen
- setting up convalescent plasma and supporting NHSE to stabilise and continue the intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIG) programmes

Next steps include:

- Structured debrief with central government
- Summarisation of organisational debriefs
- Actions/Plan updates, particularly NHSBT's Pandemic Response Plan

Infection Prevention and Control (IPC): Three sites (Colindale, Filton and the previous Southampton centre) had separate and unrelated legionella with all appropriate actions taken through the stand up of a local emergency team (LET) with an IPC team member in attendance. Full mitigations remain in place while all three centres have ongoing positive results, point of use filters are in place on affected outlets, disinfection procedures are being followed, dynamic risk assessments are ongoing, and remedial activity is being managed with our water safety authorising engineers. The IPC Board Assurance Framework was received at Clinical Governance Committee. The framework was approved with non-applicable in two domains: antimicrobial prescribing and Patient Led Assessments of the Care Environment (PLACE).

Digital, Data & Technology: Positive progress continues with our modernisation and risk reduction activities. Availability across NHSBT's critical services has remained consistently strong, with overall performance above 99.8%. This reflects the effectiveness of ongoing monitoring, maintenance, and incident prevention work across DDTS, ensuring that key systems remain stable and resilient.

We are well into a Telephony Modernisation Project to upgrade our legacy communications platform across the organisation with a new Cloud based system due to complete during 2026.

We have launched an AI Working Group to guide the responsible use of artificial intelligence within NHSBT. The group has continued and will look to expedite identifying opportunities to improve productivity and automation while maintaining robust governance and data protection.

2. Innovation

ISBT Award: The Transfusion Evidence Round-Up Team, a collaboration between the Systematic Review Initiative (SRI) and the International Society for Blood Transfusion (ISBT), was recognised by an ISBT Award for their remarkable achievements in developing and leading a widely valued initiative that has significantly improved the way transfusion professionals' access and share scientific knowledge. The Transfusion Evidence Round-Up is a quarterly overview of the top 10 studies of an internationally relevant subject in the field of transfusion medicine, distributed as an email and the Talking Transfusion podcast.

Donor Experience: The Request to Book service (formerly Waiting List) is live on blood.co.uk, enabling B-negative, O-negative and Ro donors to join a list for preferred slots. In its first week, 84 donors used it and 60 were O-negative. We aim for 400 weekly bookings once the Give Blood App equivalent launches in early November.

Since August, 2,437 O-negative donors booked via the dedicated Priority Service Line, which secures preferred slots for those unable to find one. Booking success is 100% enabled by a team reshaping grids and rescheduling nonpriority bookings.

Direct Marketing piloted a new reminder and donor preparation journey using MAT, with rollout planned for November. Work is underway on a donor retention pathway aligned with the Donor Experience strategy.

Partnership with the Ministry of Defence (MOD): NHSBT is partnering with the Ministry of Defence under a formal strategic partnership to strengthen collaboration into trauma medicine, blood science, and innovation. The partnership will enhance NHSBT's research capacity, training, and operational readiness, while expanding international engagement. It will boost additional national resilience and reinforce NHSBT's role in UK health security and medical innovation.

Assessment and Recovery Centres (ARCs): We are increasingly confident that funding will be secured for future years, meaning we have been able to set up the programme's governance, recruit to 18 key roles and create Steering Groups for Kidney, Lung and Liver.

Delivering pilots to test and learn from clinical activity is the next big step. This will bring valuable extra transplants and help us build evidence for an Outline Business Case, expected by early 2027. The tender for pilot centres has been completed, and due diligence is now underway. This includes scrutiny to ensure that they can fulfil all aspects of the pilot criteria.

We are also looking to make the most of research and innovation opportunities, so we have begun assessing how we would work with industry partners and launched a call for research.

In support of our Dried Plasma programme, a licence request to operation as a manufacturer in Cambridge centre was submitted to the MHRA. An initial inspection will be conducted by the regulator in November 2025 as part of the wider Blood Establishment Authorisation (BEA) licence assessment.

3. Donor and Patient Experience and Engagement Activity

Top-box donor satisfaction reached a YTD low of 82% in September. Waiting time satisfaction fell by 2% since July, partly due to longer appointments following the rollout of secondary venous haemoglobin tests. Despite this, donors appreciated being able to donate after the second test. Net Promoter Score was 87.8.

Organ Donation Week (22–28 September) encouraged registration on the Organ Donation Register. The campaign featured paid ads, regional media, and participation from all 154 hospital trusts and health boards. Support came from partners, stakeholders, celebrities, and ambassadors. The UK saw 64,500 opt-ins, which is a 4% increase from September 2024.

Love is in the Blood, a YouTube series with NHS and Channel 4, featured blind dates during donation to normalise the process and address time concerns. It has reached around 4 million views.

During Sickle Cell Awareness Month, NHSBT partnered with author Laura Henry-Allain MBE to launch My Blood, Your Blood, a children's book inspired by a real story. The campaign raised awareness and achieved 29.2 million opportunities to see (OTS).

As we enter winter, we are stressing the ongoing need for blood, essential daily for emergencies, childbirth, sickle cell treatment, and cancer care. The winter campaign aims to boost bookings and attract new donors, especially those of Black heritage. Marketing will target areas with collection capacity: London, West Midlands,

Manchester, Leeds, and Nottingham. Channels include video-on-demand (Sky, Virgin Media, ITV, Channel 4), radio, digital audio, social media, online display, in-game audio, and outdoor media. NHSBT will add bus wraps and pilot City Mapper ads in London. Supporting activity includes press releases, refreshed website content, direct emails, social stories, and a busy calendar of partnership and public affairs events.

Patient and Donor Engagement Policy: Following a meeting with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) in October, NHSBT has been asked to develop a patient and donor engagement policy. This work is now underway and is being led by the Chief Nursing Officer.

Safer Staffing: There is a pilot taking place in Q3 aligned to the core principles of the National Quality Board (NQB) and NHSE Guidance for Safer Staffing. This is a productivity workforce planning tool to provide assurance to organisations at all levels, support operating models and cost efficiency alongside workforce planning. This will inform on onward Safe Staffing methodology and process.

Safeguarding: A gap analysis is in progress with the Safeguarding Assurance and Accountability process which will report assurance to Clinical Governance Committee.

Infected Blood Inquiry (IBI): A formal statement has been made in Parliament, launching the public consultation and Tyrone Archer's review has been published. Although there is no UK-wide funding for the Infected Blood Inquiry Recommendation 7, individual nations are assessing their ability to respond to the recommendations within their own strategies. The NHS England and DHSC Strategy for Recommendation 7 has been embedded within the Transfusion Transformation programme as the delivery vehicle for England.

NHSBT has been asked to provide a revised funding strategy, including a small share of NHSE underspend in 2025/26 to progress scoping of IT requirements within the strategy. A request for £650K has been submitted for this year, of which £250K relates to NHSBT DDTs. The DHSC/NHSE Transfusion Transformation strategy is being co-developed with NHSBT and is currently under Cabinet and ministerial review. It includes a proposed funding plan to support a three-year implementation period. It is closely aligned with the IBI recommendations and is viewed as a key enabler to strengthen transfusion priorities and resilience within England.

Communication & Engagement: To mark **20 years of NHSBT**, we put together a media package, including statistics around the organisation's achievements since 2005 and case studies (including blood donors and an organ recipient). We worked with the Press Association to set up an interview with Peter Randle, the man who has made the most whole blood donations in the 20-year period. The piece resulted in coverage in The Guardian, BBC Online, ITV Online, Independent, Mirror Online and several regional print and online titles.

We hosted an official opening for the **Brighton Donor Centre** with local councillors, donors and recipients. The aim was to get coverage across the local media, which we did – including the local BBC reporter giving blood for the first time. We plan to keep up the publicity including by hosting visits from local MPs and the local Premiership football team.

We used **World Sight Day** in October to remind the public that we need people to say yes to cornea donation. Our media and social media work featured powerful patient

stories whose sight had been saved. We achieved seven national pieces, more than 20 local pieces including six broadcasts.

In October, we launched a new national campaign in partnership with **Supligen**, featuring over 155,000 cans of its vanilla drink carrying a blood donation message and QR code linking to the NHS donor registration page. The campaign was powerfully endorsed by Jamaica's High Commissioner to the UK, His Excellency Alexander Williams, in a visit to the Brixton Donor Centre. Through a letter, he urged Black British Jamaicans to donate blood to help patients with conditions like sickle cell. His letter, with the potential to reach up to one million black British Jamaicans, has been shared across media platforms, mobilising communities through cultural pride and trusted leadership.

Our partnership with **Clash Royale** (gaming platform) promotes organ donation to its 1.6m unique monthly UK users. To coincide with the global, in-game launch of their new Skeleton Army update, we embedded a bespoke landing page within the user journey. The page continues the games humour and tone of voice to introduce organ donation to a younger audience (primarily 18-35) and encourage registration. The partnership was supported with Hollywood-led video content and third-party social accounts (5.1m+ reach) and secured 31 pieces of media coverage.

At the end of October, we held an event in Parliament to educate Parliamentarians on all the blood components we supply to hospitals for clinical use. We engaged with 60 MPs and Members of the House of Lords about the importance of blood, plasma, platelet and stem cell donation. We also advertised the upcoming Parliamentary Blood Donation Session taking place on 4 December.

We welcomed Chair of NHS England, Penny Dash, to the Brixton Donor Centre where she had the opportunity to speak to staff and donors as well as meet with Caroline and Peter. We welcomed Fleur Anderson MP (Labour, Putney) to Wandsworth where she gave blood.

4. People

NHSBT made a significant contribution to this year's British Blood Transfusion Society Annual Conference with highly visible staff in roles as speakers, session chairs and poster authors. Several NHSBT colleagues were recognised with prestigious awards testament not only to the individual excellence of our staff but also the organisation's commitment to advancing transfusion medicine, supporting professional development, and fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation.

Those recognised include:

- **Race and Sanger Award** for outstanding young researchers - Michael Fu, Blood and Transplant Research Unit (BTRU) in Microbiology.
- **Kenneth Goldsmith Prize** – Dr Helen New (NHSBT Consultant) for her impactful research conducted in the UK.
- **Mollison Award** - Anne Davidson (NHSBT PBM team) for her lifetime contribution to Clinical Transfusion Medicine.
- **Percy Oliver Award** – jointly to Dr Nicole Thornton (IBGRL) and Julie Staves from the Oxford team for their exceptional service and dedication.
- **Margaret Kenwright Award** for UK individuals under 40 with the highest scoring abstract in their chosen category – Qanisha Hall an Epidemiologist from Microbiology Services.

- **Poster prize** - Arikana Mufunde, a Virology Higher Specialist Scientist Trainee (HSST) won a poster prize for her collaborative work with colleagues in Donor Medicine.

Forward Together Programme: The Forward Together Phase 2 Strategic Outline Business Case (OBC) was approved back in April, and a further OBC for ServiceNow HR Service Delivery was approved in October to enhance our digital service people experience. This project will deliver an off-the-shelf system to support the delivery of our work through best practice processes embedded within the digital solution. On the back of the recommendation from Phase 1, an Inclusion Learning Resource Hub has been launched for all colleagues across the organisation. A People Forum has been established to test, review and influence the successful development and rollout of changes being introduced by the Forward Together programme and the wider People directorate. It consists of change volunteers across the organisation giving them a voice, and an opportunity for them to help shape and influence the programme.

Staff Annual Conference: Our second Annual Conference took place on 23 September bringing together 272 colleagues from across NHSBT. The conference this year was hosted through the power of our technology with groups of people meeting across 12 of our locations across the country. The focus of the conference was the NHS 10-year plan, gathering thoughts from our colleagues about how NHSBT could deliver the 3 core missions and the behaviors required for successful delivery.

Our Voice Staff Survey: Results from the recently closed staff survey have been shared with the Executive Team and an action plan is being drafted. This will go to the People Committee in November and Board this month for final approval.

Anti-Discrimination Policies: As we continue to uphold a zero-tolerance stance against all forms of discrimination throughout the organisation, there are several strands of work through which we aim to show our commitment to inclusion and total prohibition of poor behaviour:

- We are launching a five-minute online Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) top-up training package to reinforce our commitment to inclusion and act as a reminder of all the learning resources and support we have on offer. This will be available on Brightspace from 17 November. Please complete this as soon as possible.
- We are updating our EDI Mandatory Training package, and this will be ready in the New Year.
- Our anti-racism framework is critical to how we move forward. It represents our commitment to educating ourselves, understanding the lived experiences of others, and developing the tools to identify and address racism and discrimination in all its forms.
- **We have adopted the Government's definition of antisemitism - the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition.**
- We are making it easier to access HR support and services, so that our policies and resources become easier to access, easier to understand and easier to apply. This includes reviewing some of our key policies, such as workplace adjustments, to remove barriers and put in place better support. Please do share your views in our workplace adjustments survey.
- We are taking forward the recommendations from our inclusive recruitment and inclusive learning and development reviews, as well as continuing to embed the anti-racism framework.

Pregnancy and Baby Loss Policy: NHSBT launched its new Pregnancy and Baby Loss policy during Baby Loss awareness week which took place between 9-15 October 2025. Supported by and developed in conjunction with the Women's Network this policy seeks to support colleagues in these sad and awful situations. The support offered through this policy is for both parents and includes specific paid leave in pregnancy loss cases, developing a Baby Loss Befrienders Network and creating a supportive environment for colleagues to return to work. **Through this work and the launch of the policy we are committed to supporting the Pregnancy Loss Pledge which recognises the work and support offered by the workplace:**

- Encourage a supportive work environment where people feel able to discuss and disclose pregnancy and/or loss without fear of being disadvantaged or discriminated against.
- Understand and implement the rules around pregnancy-related leave, ensuring staff feel able to take the time off they need.
- Show empathy and understanding towards people and their partners experiencing pregnancy loss.
- Implement a pregnancy loss policy or guidance, or ensure it is included in sickness, bereavement or other workplace policies – being mindful of the needs of partners too.
- Encourage line managers to access in-house or external guidance (such as that available on [our website](#)) on how to support someone experiencing pregnancy loss.

Support people back to work by being responsive to their needs and showing flexibility wherever possible.

Flu Campaign: We have launched our seasonal Flu Campaign, standing up clinics in our centres and encouraging our staff to have their vaccinations to protect themselves, their colleagues, and our patients and donors this winter. As of the end of October, uptake was at 19%, suggesting we are unlikely to meet the requirement to match and exceed last year's figures. A series of short sessions have been stood up to help managers understand the importance and have conversations with colleagues to increase uptake and reporting.

Workforce Development: We are advancing our leadership and talent agenda to build a future-ready workforce:

- **Leadership Development:** Manager 101 for Team Leaders and the RISE pilot for supervisors are underway. Senior leader development has launched with coaching and participation in a cross-system Action Learning Set pilot. Planning for the Senior Leader Conference on **24 November** took place.
- **Talent Agenda:** Succession planning for business-critical roles is underway, alongside broader engagement across the organisation to strengthen capability and resilience.

Apprenticeships: 2% of the workforce are undertaking an apprenticeship; 26 colleagues have successfully achieved it and 27 more have commenced this year.

5. Finance

Donor Experience - Quarter 2 reports a £631k deficit, with a forecasted year-end overspend of £1.7m. This has been approved by the Executive Team under Amber Alert.

The latest full-year forecast continues to suggest a stable financial position for 2025-26. We remain on track to deliver our operations within the funding envelope approved at the start of the year. Most directorates have successfully achieved their cost improvement targets, with only a balance of £0.7m requiring mitigation against the annual plan of £16.6m.

Work is well underway to shape the funding envelope for next year, as part of the integrated planning process. Each division is now developing detailed budgets that align with their plans and strategic priorities. In early November, the first National Commissioning Group meeting was held, which provided a forward look at 2026-27, setting out the context and expectations for service and product delivery in the year ahead.

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